



March 2003
DOH PUB. # 331-209

Fact Sheet

Consumer Confidence Reports

A yearly report on drinking water quality and safety

Water systems produce the reports for their customers

Almost everyone in Washington should get a “consumer confidence” drinking water quality report each year. These reports tell people where their water comes from and what the water system does to deliver safe drinking water to homes.

The reports are produced by “Group A community water systems”—those that serve 15 or more connections or 25 or more people in residential settings. There are about 2,300 of these systems serving almost five million people in the state.

The reports are due to customers by July 1 each year. A “customer” is anyone who regularly drinks water from the system.



Both consumers and utilities can use the information

The information helps people make informed choices about the water they drink. People will know what contaminants, if any, are in their drinking water and how these contaminants may affect their health. The report has information about where drinking water comes from, so consumers can get involved in protecting or improving their drinking water resource.

The report also gives utilities an opportunity to communicate with their customers about what it takes to deliver safe drinking water at the turn of the tap.

Reports provide system-specific information

These reports do not require a water system to collect any new data. They summarize water quality information that systems already collect. They include results of tests conducted by a system over the past five years. For example, the report that was due July 1, 2002 summarized results of water quality monitoring done from January 1998 through December 2002.

The reports list all regulated contaminants that were found, in any amount—not just those that exceed a state or federal standard.

A complete report, including mandatory educational information, can fit on a single, double-sided sheet of paper. Many systems, however, choose to provide additional information, so some of the reports are longer.

Water systems that sell water to other systems (wholesalers) also must provide to their purchasing systems either information about the quality of water provided during the previous five years or a complete report ready for purchasing systems to send to their customers. They must do this by April 1 of each year or another mutually agreeable date.

Water systems that need help producing the reports can get example reports and electronic templates. Assistance is available from professional organizations, consultants, and government agencies.



HELPING TO ENSURE SAFE AND RELIABLE DRINKING WATER

Required content includes:

- The type of water served (such as ground-water, surface water, water from another system) and the name and location of its source.
- Regulated and unregulated contaminants that have been detected in the water, their concentrations, and the allowable federal or state standard.
- Disinfection by-products or microbial contaminants, their concentrations and standards.
- Descriptions of possible health effects of contaminants in drinking water at concentrations greater than the federal or state health standard.
- Identification of the likely source of any contamination.
- Violations of any monitoring, reporting, treatment, or record keeping requirements.
- Opportunities for public involvement and water system contact information.

The regulation also requires certain educational language and a specific table format for summarizing detected contaminants. The requirements are in chapter 246-290-WAC Part 7, Subpart B.

Utilities may include additional information to better acquaint customers with their particular operations.

Updated reports to be distributed each year

The Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) is a requirement for Group A community drinking water systems. It can be delivered to water system customers and the state Department of Health Drinking Water Regional Offices any time between January 1 and July 1 of each year.

A completed CCR certification form also must be submitted to the Department of Health. Although purveyors have until October 1 to send the form to the state, because it identifies individual reports and helps state staff properly track and record receipt of reports, the state asks purveyors to send in the certification together with a copy of the report before the July 1 annual due date.

State and federal agencies regulate the process

Congress required the reports in the 1996 amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established federal regulations in 1998, and the first reports were due in October 1999.

The Washington State Department of Health's Drinking Water Division adopted the federal regulation as a state regulation in August 2000 and has developed a program to help utilities understand and comply with the requirement.

These state regulations are required to maintain state "primacy" (authority to enforce federal regulations). State primacy is more flexible and cost-efficient than federal oversight of local water systems.

For more information

Northwest Regional Office - Kent
253-395-6750

Southwest Regional Office - Olympia
360-664-0768

Eastern Regional Office - Spokane
509-456-3115

Drinking Water Division web site: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/>